

Message Text

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PAGE 01 DUBLIN 02565 061643Z

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AMCONSUL BELFAST

C O N F I D E N T I A L DUBLIN 2565

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT EI

SUBJ: INAUGURATION OF IRISH PRESIDENT

1. DR PATRICK HILLERY WAS INAUGURATED AS IRELAND'S SIXTH PRESIDENT DECEMBER 3 IN A DIGNIFIED, SHORT AND SIMPLE CEREMONY. AFTER A NON-DENOMINATIONAL SERVICE AT DUBLIN'S PRO-CATHEDRAL, THE SWEARING IN TOOK PLACE AT THE STATE HALL (ST PATRICK'S HALL) IN DUBLIN CASTLE, BEFORE THE ASSEMBLED DIPLOMATS, POLITICIANS, ACADEMICS, CLERGY, ETC. -- THE ELITE OF THE COUNTRY. IN ACCORDANCE WITH TRADITION NO DELEGATIONS FROM FOREIGN COUNTRIES WERE INVITED, THOUGH THERE WAS A FAIRLY LARGE CONTINGENT FROM THE EC COMMISSION INCLUDING OUTGOING COMMISSION PRESIDENT ORTOLI.

2. IN HIS ACCEPTANCE SPEECH HILLERY GAVE A THOUGHTFUL AND SOMEWHAT POLITICAL EXPOSITION OF THE ROLE OF THE PRESIDENT: "...THE PROCESS OF ADJUSTMENT REQUIRES THE CONSTTANT ATTENTION OF THOSE LIKE GOVERNMENTS AND
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CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 DUBLIN 02565 061643Z

PRESIDENTS, WHO HAVE CONSTITUTIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES...

I ACCEPT ITS (THE PRESIDENCY'S) DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES AND THE OBLIGATION TO RESPECT BOTH THE CONSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK AND THE DEMOCRATIC WILL... ALL MY PREDECESSORS HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO THE EVOLUTION OF THE PRESIDENCY. MY IMMEDIATE PREDECESSOR, CEARBHALL O DALAIGH, TO WHOM I PAY TRIBUTE HERE AND NOW, HAS DONE SO IN AN IMPORTANT WAY. I BELIEVE IT WILL BE NEITHER AN EASY NOR AN INSTANT ACCOMPLISHMENT FOR ME TO MAKE MY CONTRIBUTION TO THE FURTHER EVOLUTION OF THE OFFICE."

3. THERE WAS SOME RUMBLING AND DISCUSSION AROUND DUBLIN ABOUT THIS UNUSUALLY POLITICAL SPEECH -- THE PRESIDENT IS SUPPOSED TO BE ABOVE AND INSULATED FROM POLITICS. MOST HAVE NOW CONCLUDED THAT THIS SUBTLE, CAREFULLY WORDED DISCOURSE REPRESENTED HILLERY'S NOTICE TO COSGRAVE THAT HE UNDERSTOOD AND APPROVED OF FORMER PRESIDENT O DALAIGH'S MOTIVES FOR RESIGNATION, AND THAT HE IS PREPARED TO USE THE FEW POWERS OF THE PRESIDENCY, E.G., REFERRAL OF BILLS TO THE SUPREME COURT FOR A CONSTITUTIONAL TEST, IF EVENTS PROVE IT NECESSARY. THE "EVOLUTION" OF THE ROLE OF THE PRESIDENT, WHICH HILLERY STRESSED, COULD LEAD TO SOME FURTHER CLASHES BETWEEN PRESIDENT AND GOVERNMENT. HILLERY IS A RELATIVELY YOUNG, VIGOROUS, THOROUGHLY POLITICAL PERSON WHO WILL PROBABLY NOT BE VERY COMFORTABLE IN THE CEREMONIAL ROLE OF PRESIDENT. BUT, AT LEAST FOR THE MOMENT, IRELAND'S MINI "CONSTITUTIONAL CRISIS" IS PAST, NO CROCKERY HAS BEEN BROKEN, INSTITUTIONS ARE REAFFIRMED. CURLEY

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